

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council**



OFFICE OF THE CHAIRPERSON

February 5, 2018

The Honorable Kenyan McDuffie
Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
Committee on Business and Economic Development
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004

Re: Responses to Fiscal Year 2017 Performance Oversight Questions

Dear Chairman McDuffie:

In response to the Committee on Business and Economic Development's request dated January 19, 2018, I am providing the attached answers to your questions in advance of the Performance Oversight Hearing on the District of Columbia For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council (FHVAC). Please contact me at your convenience if you have any questions or comments regarding these answers in advance of the hearing.

Sincerely,

FOR-HIRE VEHICLE ADVISORY COUNCIL

By: *Linwood Jolly*
LINWOOD JOLLY
Chairperson

For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council Responses to FY 2017 Performance Oversight Questions
Chairman McDuffie
Committee on Business and Economic Development
January 31, 2018

1. Please provide a list of the Council's current members. For each member, please provide the following:

- a. **The member's name;**
- b. **The Ward, agency or organization the member represents;**
- c. **Who appointed the member;**
- d. **The member's term of expiration; and**
- e. **The member's attendance record.**

All members are appointed by the Mayor.

1. Jason Arvanites; Ward 6; Public Member (company providing vehicle for-hire service in the District); term expires January 30, 2020; attended all meetings, to date.
2. Ernest Chrappah, Ward 3; D.C. Agency Representative; no term*; attended all meetings, to date.
3. Dawit Dagne; Ward 1; Public Member (operates a public or private vehicle for-hire); term expires February 8, 2020; replaced Hana Bekele, who resigned following the third meeting.
4. Elliott Ferguson II; Ward 6; Public Member (hospitality/tourism industry); term expires July 18, 2019; attended 2/8/17 meeting (missed 6/22/17 and 10/18/17 meetings).
5. Linwood Jolly (Chairperson); Ward 4; Public Member (unaffiliated with vehicle for-hire industry); term expires July 18, 2019; attended all meetings, to date.
6. Dottie Love-Wade; Ward 1; Public Member (unaffiliated with vehicle for-hire industry); term expires July 18, 2020; attended 2/8/17 and 10/18/17 meetings (missed 6/22/17 meeting).
7. Erik Moses; Ward 4; hospitality/tourism industry; term expires on October 25, 2019; attended all meetings, to date.
8. Evian Patterson; Ward 1; D.C. Agency Representative; no term*; attended all meetings, to date.
9. Jeffery Schaeffer; Maryland Resident; Public Member (company providing vehicle for-hire service in the District); term expires July 18, 2019; attended all meetings, to date.
10. Anthony Thomas; Ward 4; Public Member (operator of a public or private vehicle for-hire); term expires January 30, 2020; attended all meetings, to date.
11. Anthony Wash; Ward 6; Public Member (unaffiliated with the vehicle for-hire industry) term expires July 18, 2018; attended 2/8/17 meetings (missed 6/22/17 and 10/18/17 meetings).

For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council Responses to FY 2017 Performance Oversight Questions
Chairman McDuffie
Committee on Business and Economic Development
January 31, 2018

* Under D.C. Code 50-301.10a, only the nine community/public members have terms. See District of Columbia Taxicab Commission Establishment Act of 1985, as amended by the Transportation Reorganization Amendment Act of 2016 (“TRAA”) (Law 21-124, Act 21-378, eff. June 22, 2016).

2. Please provide a list of the Council’s meeting dates, times, and locations for FY17 and FY18, to date.

Meetings to date: February 8, 2017; June 22, 2017; and October 18, 2017. All meetings have been held beginning at 10:00 a.m. in the DFHV Public Hearing Room, 2235 Shannon Place, S.E., Second Floor, Washington, D.C. 20020.

3. Did the Council receive funds in FY17 and FY18? If so, please provide the following:

- a. **The amount of the funding;**
- b. **The source of the funding;**
- c. **A list of all expenditures; and**
- d. **A description of how these funds furthered the Board’s/Council’s mission.**

No, the Advisory Council did not receive funds in FY17 or FY18.

- a. No funding has been received.
- b. DFHV provided staff support and administrative resources to the Council in FY17 and continues to provide support in FY18.
- c. DFHV’s resources have consisted of: providing space on the DFHV website to maintain a page describing the Council, its members, and its functions; providing space on the DFHV website to post notices and agendas for the Council’s public hearings; allowing the Council to use the DFHV hearing room at Shannon Place, S.E. for its hearings; providing the services of DFHV’s Executive Assistant for administrative support in connection with FHVAC’s meetings; and providing court reporting services to create an official record of each hearing.
- d. DFHV’s resources have been used to publicly promote knowledge of and access to information about the Council, its functions, and meetings; and provided it with the space and resources to hold its meetings.

4. Please describe the Council’s activities in FY17 and FY18 to date.

Meetings were held on February 8, 2017; June 22, 2017; and October 18, 2017. DFHV Director Ernest Chrappah attended and participated at all three meetings.

Issues that the Council has considered at meetings include: availability of taxicab vehicle licenses; competitive pressures on taxicabs created by private vehicles-for-hire (TNC vehicles); owners’ concerns about the enforcement of the vehicle retirement rules against older vehicles that may present safety issues due to age and/or mileage; driver perception of the 25-cent surcharge – which is paid by passengers, not by drivers; costs to companies of providing

For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council Responses to FY 2017 Performance Oversight Questions
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January 31, 2018

wheelchair service to persons with disabilities, such as dispatch fees; burdens associated with regulatory compliance; driver perceptions about the process and availability of DFHV's grant programs to support acquiring new "H tags" in conjunction with purchasing a new vehicle; industry interest in expanding DFHV client service online; addressing driver confusion about the loitering rules; and leveling the playing field with regard to District policy for point-to-point service by taxicabs and private vehicles-for-hire (TNC vehicles).

Outside of the Council's meetings, the Chairperson has brokered discussions between DFHV and the D.C. Electric Cab Operators Coalition. The Coalition, represented by Jessica Wasserman, Esq., publicly raised concerns about the electric vehicles (EVs) they had chosen to purchase, specifically the Nissan Leaf, as a means of acquiring new DFHV vehicle licenses (H-tags). The Leaf has a range of about 100 miles, which the Coalition's members asserted was too short for practical use as a taxicab. Although the members attributed their situation to the Department, the Chairperson's efforts led to a meeting between Director Chrappah and Ms. Wasserman in May 2017, after which the Coalition dropped the public pursuit of its concerns, and DFHV made two grant programs available to existing and new eligible EV purchasers (up to \$5,000 each) to offset the costs of acquiring or paying the loans on these vehicles. This was a positive outcome for all parties involved and will help the District move forward with EV adoption.

Also, the Chairperson recommended to the Director that the DFHV grant application process be simplified. The Department took action consistent with this recommendation, putting in place measures to streamline grant applications for EV owners. The application for the second grant program was greatly simplified compared to prior versions.

In addition, the Chairperson and Director Chrappah attended a town hall with Councilmember Todd on March 29, 2017: the Ward 4 Meeting with DFHV and FHVAC.

5. Please describe the Council's goals for the remainder of FY18 and the timeline for completion?

The Council believes that residents might benefit from greater uniformity in point-to-point service policy for taxicabs versus private vehicles-for-hire ("VFH") (TNCs). The Council will continue to explore possible solutions at subsequent meetings.

The Council would like to see DFHV increase its public engagement through more frequent live and virtual town halls, and other events. Notwithstanding substantial public awareness of the for-hire issues in the District, the Council believes that there is an opportunity to increase engagement of residents and industry members at DFHV meetings and events. The Council believes the quality of FHVAC's recommendations to DFHV will be improved with greater community attendance and participation (to be implemented by end 2nd Q. FY18).

6. What challenges does the Council currently face? Please describe the challenges and how the agency plans to address them.

The FHVAC's first three meetings proceeded in an orderly and productive manner. The Council believes, however, that it would elevate the public's and industry's perception of the Council for it to have written procedures for the conduct of its meetings. It plans to complete such procedures by the end of the 3rd Quarter of FY18.

The Council's members currently serve without compensation. FHVAC supports passage of the "Omnibus District of Columbia Department of For-Hire Vehicles Amendment Act of 2017" (B22-0066, currently under Council Review, Public Hearing held June 19, 2017), which would reimburse the FHVAC's members for parking and related expenses.

7. How does the Council represent and solicit feedback from residents? Please describe:

- a. **What the Council has learned from this feedback; and**
- b. **How the Council has changed its practices or positions as a result of such feedback.**

The Council's meetings were advertised and scheduled at times appropriate for participation by residents, allowing them to provide input to the Council. In addition, the Council has begun to proactively conduct meetings in each Ward. Our first meeting was hosted by Councilmember Brandon Todd, in Ward 4. The chairperson hosted a Council Work Session on January 17, 2018, to debut DFHV's 2018 goals and initiatives.

- a. We have learned that residents have concerns regarding their choices for modes of transportation, security, and access to wheelchair accessible rides.
- b. We have relayed these concerns to the DFHV Director, and DFHV have addressed the issues and provided updates on the DFHV website to reflect the changes, as well.

8. How does the Council represent and solicit feedback from drivers? Please describe:

- a. **What the Council has learned from this feedback; and**
- b. **How the Council has changed its practices or positions as a result of such feedback.**

The Council's meetings were advertised and scheduled at times appropriate for participation by drivers. We also invited drivers to present their concerns at our meetings. The Council's membership includes driver representatives.

- a. We have learned that drivers are concerned about the future of the industry and have expressed concerns regarding safety, security, and lowering the cost of doing business.

For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council Responses to FY 2017 Performance Oversight Questions
Chairman McDuffie
Committee on Business and Economic Development
January 31, 2018

b. The Council has worked with DFHV and supported the measures implemented with the Digital Taximeter System (DTS), has reduced the cost of doing business for taxi drivers.

9. How does the Council represent and solicit feedback from owners? Please describe:

a. **What the Council has learned from this feedback; and**

b. **How the Council has changed its practices or positions as a result of such feedback.**

The Council's meetings were advertised and scheduled at times appropriate for participation by owners. In addition, we have advertised our meetings directly to the owners. Taxicab companies are also represented on the FHVAC.

a. Owners are concerned about the future of the industry and, in particular, they are interested in innovation to drive down costs and increase profits for drivers.

b. The Council has worked with DFHV to ensure that the views of owners are reflected in the decisions that are implemented. DTS was a major victory for owners, drivers, and residents.

10. How does the Council represent and solicit feedback from Transportation Network Companies (TNC's)? Please describe:

a. **What the Council has learned from this feedback; and**

b. **How the Council has changed its practices or positions as a result of such feedback.**

The Council's meetings were advertised and scheduled at times appropriate for participation by TNCs. TNCs are also represented on the Council and they provide input on an ongoing basis. They are interested in innovation that enhances the software platforms that they operate, and in aligning their business operations with the goals of the DFHV, where possible.

a. Unlike New York and Chicago, TNCs do not provide trip data to the DFHV due to concerns about competitive advantage, but TNCs are interested in creating partnerships to address transportation inequities throughout the city.

b. We have continued to work with DFHV to identify opportunities for partnerships between taxicab owners and TNCs.

11. How often has the chairperson of the FHVAC met with the Director (or designee) of the Department of For-Hire Vehicles (DFHV) to date? What were the dates of those meetings?

The Council's Chairperson has met with Director Chrappah three times, in advance of each of the FHVAC's three public meetings on February 8, 2017; June 22, 2017; and October 18, 2017.

For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council Responses to FY 2017 Performance Oversight Questions
Chairman McDuffie
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January 31, 2018

The Chairperson and the Director also met prior to the town hall with Councilmember Todd on March 29, 2017.

12. Has the DFHV made publicly available all recommendations discussed between the DFHV and the FHVAC, the DFHV's decision in response to the recommendations, and an explanation of the decision made by the DFHV? Please provide an overview of all recommendations.

To FHVAC's knowledge, its informal recommendations and comments on DFHV's activities are fully reflected in the official transcripts of the Council's three meetings to date, available [here](#). The Council has not issued formal recommendations to the Department as of this time.